

## Historic and Prehistoric Avian Records from Easter Island<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Eight avian taxa were identified in Recent archeological faunal material from Easter Island in the southeastern Pacific. Three of these had not previously been reported for the island, raising to 20 the total number of bird species known from this locality.

THE AVIFAUNA OF Easter Island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean consisted of sea birds until the early Polynesian settlers brought the domestic chicken, *Gallus gallus* (Métraux 1940), and Chileans later introduced the Chilean tinamou, *Nothoprocta perdicaria perdicaria*, and the greater red-breasted meadowlark, *Pezites militaris militaris* (Fuentes 1914).

In 1973, William S. Ayres collected 8 kg of avian bones, mostly chicken, from archeological sites on Easter Island dated between 600 and 200 years before present. Ayres (1975) provides radiocarbon dates and obsidian hydration dates for the sites listed below. A set of duplicate specimens has been retained in the collection of Pierce Brodkorb at the University of Florida, and the remaining material is in the care of Ayres at the University of Oregon.

Eight taxa (denoted by asterisks below) were identified from this material. The list of birds known from Easter Island is now increased to the 20 species listed below, previous records being indicated as follows: a, Fuentes (1914); b, Lönnberg (1921); c, Métraux (1940); d, Millie and Johnson (1970).

### TINAMIFORMES

1. *Nothoprocta perdicaria perdicaria* Kittlitz (a, \*); Chilean tinamou, site 7-1: squares 2 (level 7) and 7 (5-10 cm); site

35-7: squares 2, 11, 12, 13 (all level 1), and 15 (level 2); site 35-8: square 16 (level 1).

The material includes five humeri, two scapulae, one coracoid, one sternum, one pelvis, three femora, two tarsometatarsi.

### PROCELLARIIFORMES

2. cf. *Diomedea cauta* Gould (\*); white-capped albatross, site 14-1: square 1, level 6, 50-60 cm.

One cervical vertebra was examined.

3. *Macronectes giganteus* Gmelin (d); giant fulmar.
4. cf. *Halobaena caerulea* Gmelin (\*); blue petrel, site 35-8: square 5, depth unknown.

The proximal end of one carpometacarpus is badly damaged on the articular surface.

5. *Pachyptila turtur* (Mathews) (\*); fairy prion, site 35-9: test pit 4, 10-20 cm.

The material consists of the proximal end of one carpometacarpus. The fairy prion is also recorded from northern Chile (Blake 1977).

6. *Puffinus nativitatis* Streets (d); Christmas Island shearwater.
7. *Pterodroma neglecta* (Schlegel) (b, d); Kermadec petrel.
8. *Pterodroma arminjoniana heraldica* Lönnberg (b, d); herald petrel.
9. cf. *Pterodroma lessonii* Garnot (c, \*); white-headed petrel, site 35-9: test pit 3, 30-70 cm.

The distal end of one ulna is much

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larger than those of the two *Pterodroma* species above.

Métraux's (1940) expedition collected "a specimen of *Oestrelata* (*Pterodroma*) *incerta* or *leucoptera*," with no description given. *Pterodroma incerta* is not found in that part of the world (Blake 1977), and the ulna of *P. leucoptera* is small in comparison to the ulna fragment.

10. *Nesofregatta albigularis* (Finsch) (\*); white-throated storm petrel, site 34-2: square 20, level 1.

The one complete tarsometatarsus is 45.0 mm long.

#### PELECANIFORMES

11. *Phaethon rubricauda* (Mathews) (c, d); red-tailed tropicbird.
12. *Sula dactylatra* Lesson (c, d); blue-faced booby.
13. *Fregata minor* Mathews (c, d); great frigatebird.

#### GALLIFORMES

14. *Gallus gallus* (Linnaeus) (a, b, c, \*); domestic chicken, sites 7-1, 12-1, 14-1, 34-2, 35-2, 35-7, 35-8.

All skeletal elements are represented, mostly in fragments. The remains of chickens make up the vast majority of the avian bones in the collection.

#### CHARADRIIFORMES

15. *Sterna fuscata luctuosa* Philippi and Landbeck (d); sooty tern.
16. *Sterna lunata* Peale (c, d); gray-backed tern.
17. *Procelsterna cerulea skottsbergii* Lönnberg (b, c, d); gray noddy.
18. *Anous stolidus pileatus* Scopoli (c, d, \*);

brown noddy, site 7-1: square 8, 38-43 cm.

The brown noddy is represented by the proximal end of one tibiotarsus.

19. *Gygis alba royana* Mathews (b, c, d); white tern.

#### PASSERIFORMES

20. *Pezites militaris militaris* (Linnaeus) (a, c); greater red-breasted meadowlark.

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